Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 14261 291544Z
ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14261

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, CSCE, SHUM, UR
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE NEW PRESSURE ON SAKHAROV

REF: MOSCOW 13409

1. WE HAVE AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT A LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK AGO THE HUSBAND OF SAKHAROV'S SISTER DIED UNDER PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES SUGGESTING FOUL PLAY. ACCORDING TO THIS STORY, HE WENT OUT ONE EVENING TO WALK HIS DOG AND FAILED TO RETURN HOME. LATER, HIS WIFE RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE MILITIA INFORMING HER THAT SHE SHOULD CALL AT THE STATION TO PICK UP HER DOG. WHEN SHE ASKED WHAT HAD HAPPENED, THE CALLER RESPONDED, "AND BY THE WAY, YOU SHOULD ALSO GO TO THE MORGUE TO PICK UP THE BODY OF YOUR HUSBAND." ACCORDING TO THE MILITIA, HE HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE BY HANGING. THE FUNERAL TOOK PLACE SEVERAL DAYS AGO.

2. WE HEARD THIS STORY FROM THE WIFE OF A WELL-KNOWN SOVIET SCULPTOR WHO HAS A WOMAN FRIEND WHO IS A FRIEND OF SAKHAROV'S SISTER. ACCORDING TO THIS FRIEND, SAKHAROV'S SISTER LEADS A RE-TIRING LIFE AND DOES NOT INVOLVE HERSELF IN SAKHAROV'S AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, HER HUSBAND--A BIOLOGIST BY PROFESSION NAMED REKUBRAT-SKIY--HELPED SAKHAROV BY DOING ERRANDS, AS COURIER, ETC. ACCORD-ING TO SOURCE, THE DEATH OCCURRED NEAR THEIR HOME IN THE MOSCOW
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SUBURB OF MATVEYEVKA. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT SOURCE REGARDED DEATH AS CAUSED BY FOUL PLAY. OUR CONTACT WAS TOLD THAT ABOVE ALL, SAKHAROV'S SISTER DID NOT WANT PUBLICITY AND WAS ASKED TO KEEP THE MATTER IN CONFIDENCE.

3. COMMENT: ASSUMING THE STORY IS TRUE, WE ARE SURPRISED THAT AN EVENT OF SUCH MAGNITUDE INVOLVING SAKHAROV'S IMMEDIATE FAMILY

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COULD BE KEPT QUIET FOR SO LONG, EVEN IF SAKHAROV HIMSELF RE-
SPECTED HIS SISTER'S DESIRE TO AVOID PUBLICITY. IT SHOULD THERE-
FORE BE TREATED WITH CAUTION UNTIL WE HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO CHECK
IT OUT. IN THIS REGARD, WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CORROBORATION
THE DEPARTMENT CAN PROVIDE. WE NOTE THE SPECIFICITY OF THE REPORT
AND THAT THE CONTACT IS AN ESTABLISHED ONE. IF THE STORY IS TRUE,
IT MAY MEAN THAT THE AUTHORITIES ARE MOVING OMINOUSLY TO TIGHTEN
THE NOOSE AROUND SAKHAROV IN ISOLATING HIM AND MAKING HIS LIFE
IN THE USSR INTOLERABLE. IN THE LIGHT OF THIS REPORT, THE STORY
WE REPORTED EARLIER (SEE REFTEL) ABOUT THE ALLEGED PREPARATION OF
A PAMPHLET ON "WHY SAKHAROV WAS EXPELLED FROM THE SOVIET UNION"
WOULD SEEM TO ACQUIRE A MORE PLAUSIBLE MEANING.

4. SUBSEQUENT TO DRAFTING THE ABOVE, WE LEARNED THAT SAKHAROV
TOLD AN ITALIAN JOURALIST FOUR OR FIVE DAYS AGO (I.E., PRESUMABLY
JUST AFTER THE DEATH OF SAKHAROV'S BROTHER-IN-LAW) THAT SAKHAROV
DOES NOT NOW EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF LEAVING THE USSR. HE
REPORTEDLY SAID NOTHING TO THE JOURNALIST ABOUT HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW'S
DEATH.
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